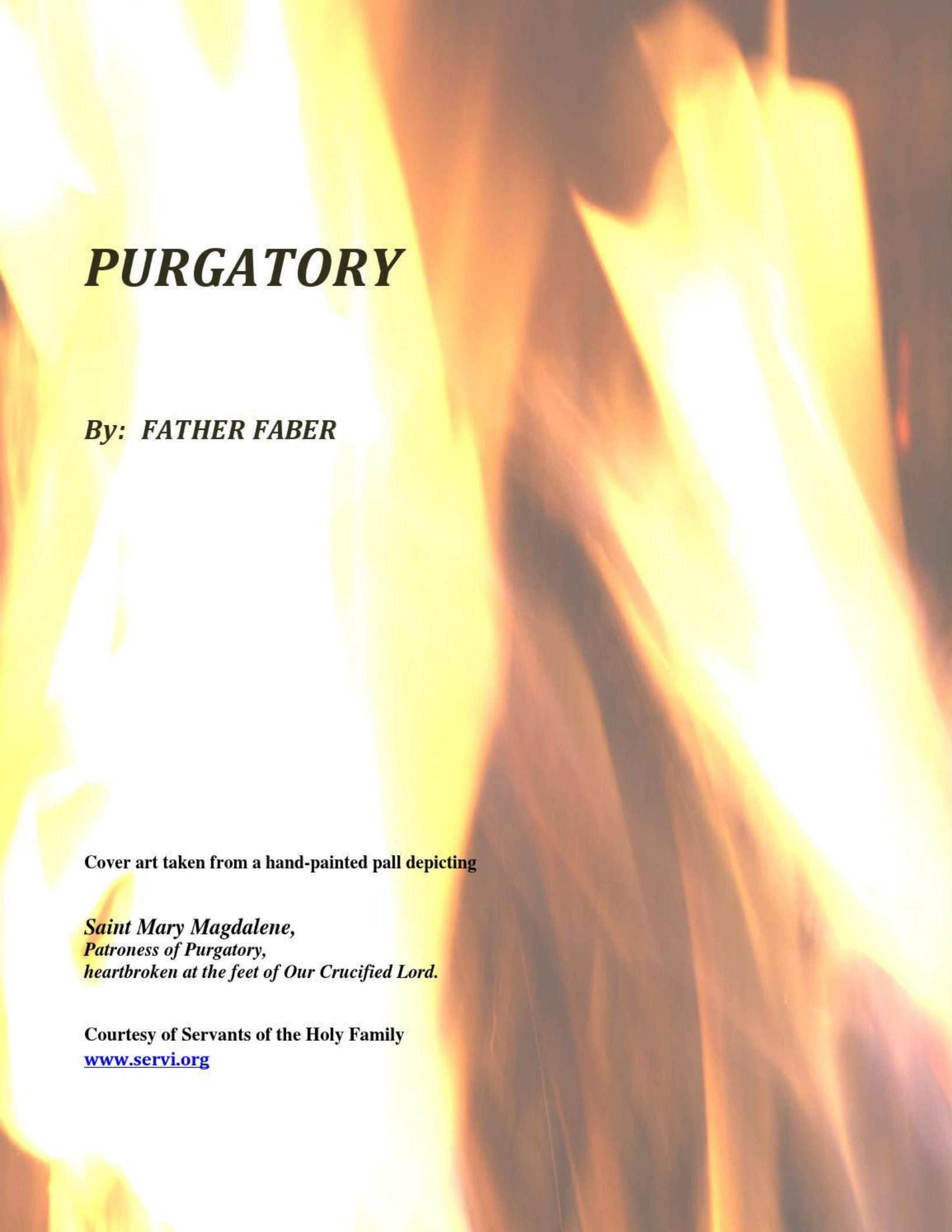




Purgatory



PURGATORY

By: FATHER FABER

Cover art taken from a hand-painted pall depicting

***Saint Mary Magdalene,
Patroness of Purgatory,
heartbroken at the feet of Our Crucified Lord.***

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PURGATORY

By: FATHER FABER

Reverend Frederick William Faber was born in England in 1814; ordained for the Church of England in 1839; received into the Catholic Church in 1845; joined Newman's Oratory in 1848; and died in 1863.

There have always been two views of purgatory prevailing in the Church, not contradictory the one of the other, but rather expressive of the mind and devotion of those who have embraced them.

The first view is embodied in the terrifying sermons of the Italian Quaresimali, and in those wayside pictures which so often provoke the fastidiousness of the English traveler. It loves to represent purgatory as a hell which is not eternal. Violence, confusion, wailing, and horror preside over its descriptions. It dwells, and truly, on the terribleness of the pain of sense which the soul is mysteriously permitted to endure. The fire is the same fire as that of hell, created for the single and express purpose of giving torture. Our earthly fire is as painted fire compared to it. Besides this, there is a special and indefinable horror to the unbodied soul in becoming the prey of this material agony. The sense of imprisonment, close and intolerable, and the intense palpable darkness are additional features in the horror of the scene, which prepares us for that sensible neighborhood of hell, which many Saints have spoken of as belonging to purgatory. Angels are represented as active executioners of God's awful justice. Some have even held that the demons are permitted to touch and harass the spouses of Christ in those ardent fires. Then to this horror of the pain of sense, is added the dreadfulness of the pain of loss. The beauty of God remains in itself the same immensely desirable object it ever was. But the soul is changed. All that in life and in the world of sense dulled its desires after God is gone from it, so that it seeks Him with an impetuosity which no imagination can at all conceive. The very burning excess of its love becomes the measure of its intolerable pain. What love can do even on earth we learn from the example of Father John Baptist Sanchez, who said he was sure he should die of misery if any morning he rose he should know that he was certain not to die that day? To those horrors we might add many more which depict purgatory simply as a hell which is not eternal.

The second view of purgatory does not deny any of the features of the preceding view, but it almost puts them out of sight by the other considerations that it brings more prominently forward. It goes into purgatory with its eyes fascinated and its spirit sweetly tranquilized by the face of Jesus, its sight of the Sacred Humanity at the

particular Judgment which it has undergone. That vision abides with it still and beautifies the uneven terrors of its prison as if with perpetual silvery showers of moonlight which seem to fall from Our Savior's loving eyes. In the sea of fire it holds fast by that image. In His sight, the moment it perceives its own unfitness for Heaven, it wings its voluntary flight to purgatory, like a dove to her proper nest in the shadows of the forest. There need be no Angels to convey it thither. It is its own free worship of the purity of God.

In that moment the soul loves God most tenderly and in return is most tenderly loved by Him. The soul is in punishment, true, but it is in unbroken union with God. It has no remembrances says Saint Catherine of Genoa most positively, no remembrance at all of its past sins or of earth. Its sweet prison, its holy sepulcher, is in the adorable will of its heavenly Father, and there it abides the term of its purification with the most perfect contentment and the most unutterable love. As it is not teased by any vision of self or sin, so neither is it harassed by an atom of fear, or by a single doubt of its own imperturbable security. It is impeccable; and there was a time on earth when that gift alone seemed as if it would contain all heaven in itself. It cannot commit the slightest imperfection. It cannot have the least movement of impatience. It can do nothing whatever which will in the least displease God. It loves God above everything and it loves Him with a pure and disinterested love. It is constantly consoled by Angels and can only rejoice in the confirmed assurance of its own salvation. No, its bitterest agonies are accompanied by a profound unshaken peace that is indescribable in any language of this world.

No sooner has a soul, with the guilt of no mortal sin upon it, but owing to God a debt of temporal punishment, issued from the world, and been judged, than it perceives itself to be confirmed in grace and charity (according to Saint Catherine). It is incapable either of sinning or of meriting anymore; and it is destined by an eternal and immutable decree to enter one day as nobility into the kingdom of the blessed; to see, to love, and to enjoy God, the perpetual fountain of all felicity.

In that instant of departing the world, all the sins of its past are represented to the soul, whether mortal or venial, even though they have been remitted in lifetime by Contrition and the Sacrament of Penance. But after this transitory and instantaneous view of them, the soul remembers nothing more about them. Saint Catherine's words are, "The cause of purgatory that these souls have in themselves, they see once in passing out of this life and never see again afterwards." The reason of this exhibition of sins is, she teaches us, to enable the soul in that moment, by an act, no longer indeed meritorious, but nevertheless a real act of the will, to detest all its sins afresh, and especially those venial sins for which it had not contrition in life, either through

the weakness of an imperfect heart or through the accident of a sudden death. So it may be strictly true, that no sin whatever is pardoned unless the sinner makes an act of detestation of it.

After this momentary view of sins and formal detestation of them, the soul perceives in itself the evil consequences and malignant legacies of the sins and those consequences and legacies form what Saint Catherine calls, "The impediment of seeing God." "The rust of sin," she says, "is the impediment, and the fire in purgatory consumes the rust; and, as a thing which is covered cannot correspond to the reverberation of the sun's rays, so, if the covering is consumed, the thing is at length laid open to the sun."

As soon as the soul perceives itself to be acceptable to God and a constituted heir of paradise, but unable, because of this impediment, to take immediate possession of its inheritance, it conceives an intense desire to be rid of this hindrance, this double obligation of guilt and punishment. Knowing that only purgatory can consume the guilt and punishment and that it is for that very end God condemns the soul to fire, the soul desires itself to endure the punishment. The soul separated from the body (these are Saint Catherine's words), finding in itself this impediment that can be taken away only by purgatory, at once throws itself into purgatory with right good will.

If the soul did not find this possibility of purgatory perfectly contrived for the removal of this hindrance, there would instantaneously be generated in that soul a hell far worse than purgatory, inasmuch as it would see that because of this impediment it could not unite itself to God Who is its end. Wherefore, if the soul could find another purgatory fiercer than this, in which it could be rid of this impediment sooner, it would speedily plunge itself therein, through the impetuosity of the love it bears to God.

But this is not all. Saint Catherine goes on to teach that if the soul, laboring under this impediment, were free to choose between ascending at once, as it is, to paradise, and descending to suffer in purgatory, it would choose to suffer, although the sufferings would be almost as dreadful as those of hell. These are her words, "Of how much importance purgatory is no tongue can tell, no mind can conceive. So much I see, that its pain is almost as if it were that of hell; and yet I see also that the soul that perceives in itself the slightest flaw or mote of imperfection, would rather throw itself into a thousand hells than find itself in the presence of the Divine Majesty with that defect upon it. Therefore, seeing purgatory to be intended to take away these flaws, forthwith it plunges into it, and it seems by its bearing, as I see, to conceive that it finds there an invention of no little mercy, simply in the being able to get rid of this impediment."

When the righteous soul has thus arrived in purgatory, losing sight of everything else, it sees before it only two objects--the extremity of suffering and the extremity of joys.

Extremity of suffering by the soul is described as a most tremendous pain caused by knowing that God loves it with an infinite love, that He is the Chief Good, that He regards the soul as His daughter, and that He has predestined it to enjoy Him forever in company with the Blessed. Hence, the soul loves Him with a pure and most perfect charity. At the same time the soul perceives that it cannot see Him or enjoy Him yet, though it so intensely yearns to do so; and this afflicts it so much the more, as it is quite uncertain when the term of its penal exile, away from its Lord and paradise, will be fulfilled. This is the pain of loss in purgatory, of which Saint Catherine says that it is "a pain so extreme, that no tongue can tell it and no understanding can grasp the least portion of it. Though God in His favor showed me a little spark thereof, I cannot in any way express it with my tongue."

Now let us examine the other object, the extremity of joy. As the soul loves God with the purest affection and knows its sufferings to be the will of God in order to procure its purification, it conforms itself perfectly to the divine decree. While in purgatory, it sees nothing but that this pleases God; it takes in no idea but that of His will; it apprehends nothing as clearly as the suitableness of this purification, in order to present it all fair and lovely to so great a majesty. Thus, Saint Catherine says, "If a soul, having still something left to be cleansed away, were presented to the Vision of God, it would be worse than that of ten purgatories, for it would be quite unable to endure that excessive goodness and that exquisite justice." Hence, it is that the suffering soul is entirely resigned to the will of its Creator. It loves its very pains, and rejoices in them because they are a holy ordinance of God. Thus in the midst of the ardent heats it enjoys a contentment so complete that it exceeds the grasp of human intelligence to comprehend it. "I do not believe," says Saint Catherine, "that it is possible to find a contentment to compare with that of the souls in purgatory, unless it is the contentment of the Saints in paradise. This contentment increases daily through the influx of God into those souls and this influx of contentment increases in proportion as the impediment is consumed and worn away. Indeed, so far as the will is concerned, we can hardly say that the pains are pains at all, so contentedly do the souls rest in the ordinance of God, to whose will pure love unites them.

In another place, Saint Catherine says that this inexplicable jubilee of the soul, while it is undergoing purgatory, springs from the strength and purity of its love of God. This love gives to the soul such a level of contentment that it cannot be expressed.

This contentment does not take away one iota of the pain. No, it is the retarding of love from the possession of its object that causes the pain; and the pain is greater

according to the greater perfection of love of which God has made the soul capable. Thus, the souls in purgatory have at once the greatest contentment and the greatest suffering; and one does not hinder the other. As to prayers, alms, and masses, Saint Catherine asserts that the souls experience great consolation from them but in these, as in other matters, their principal solicitude is that everything should be weighed in the most equitable scales of the Divine Will, leaving God to take His own course in everything, and to pay Himself and His justice in the way His own infinite goodness chooses to select.

When Saint Catherine looked at herself with the light of supernatural illumination, she saw that God had set her up in the Church as an express and living image of purgatory. She says, "This form of purification, which I behold in the souls in purgatory, I perceive in my own soul now. I see that my soul dwells in its body as in a purgatory altogether conformable to the true purgatory, only in such measure as my body can bear without dying. Nevertheless, it is always increasing by little and little, until it reaches the point when it will really die. Saint Catherine's death was indeed most wonderful, and has always been considered as a martyrdom of Divine Love. So truly from the beginning, her position has been appreciated as the great doctor of purgatory. That in her old life, the *vita antica*, examined by theologians in 1670, and approved in the Roman process of her canonization, and which was composed by Marabotto, her confessor, and Vernaza, her spiritual son, it is said, "Verily it seems that God set up this creature as a mirror and an example of the pains of the other life, which souls suffer in purgatory." It is just as if He had placed her upon a high wall, dividing this life from the life to come; so that, seeing what is suffered in that life beyond, she might manifest to us, even in this life, what we are to expect when we have passed the boundary. This is a mere epitome of her wonderful and exquisitely beautiful treatise, which has given Saint Catherine a rank among the theologians of the Church.

I suppose there is none of us who expects to be lost. We know and feel, with more or less of alarm, the greatness of the risk we are running, but to expect to be lost would be the sin of despair. Hell is only practical to us as a motive of greater diligence, greater strictness, greater circumspectness, and greater fear. That is not the case with purgatory. I suppose we all expect, or think ourselves sure, to go there. If we do not think much of the matter at all, then we may have some vague notion of going straight to Heaven as soon as we are judged. But if we seriously reflect upon it, upon our own lives, upon God's sanctity, upon what we read in books of devotion and the lives of the Saints, I can hardly conceive any one of us expecting to escape purgatory. I also think that any of us will get there only by a stretch of the divine mercy. It would more likely be vain presumption than heroic hope, if we thought otherwise. Now, if we really expect that our road to Heaven will be through the punishment of purgatory, for

surely its purification is penal, it very much concerns us to know what is common to both the views of purgatory that prevail in the Church.

First, both these views agree that the pains are extremely severe. Both views also agree to the office that God intends purgatory to fulfill for the disembodied soul and the length of the suffering.

This requires to be dwelt upon, as it is hard to convince people of it, and a great deal comes of the conviction, both to ourselves and others. This duration may be understood in two ways: first, as of actual length of time, and, secondly, as of seeming length from the excess of pain. With regard to the first, if we look into the revelations of Sister Francesca of Pampeluna, we find, among some hundreds of cases, that by far the great majority suffered thirty, forty, or sixty years.

This disclosure may teach us greater watchfulness over our selves, and more unwearied perseverance in praying for the departed. The old foundations for perpetual Masses embody the same sentiment. We are apt to leave off too soon, imagining with a foolish and unenlightened fondness that our friends are freed from purgatory much sooner than they really are. If Sister Francesca beheld the souls of many fervent Carmelites (some of whom had wrought miracles in life) still in purgatory ten, twenty, thirty, sixty years after their death, and still not near their deliverance, as many told her, what must become of us and ours? Then as to seeming length from the extremity of pain, there are many instances on record in the Chronicles of the Franciscans, the life of Saint Francis Jerome, and elsewhere, of souls appearing an hour or two after death, and thinking they had been many years in purgatory. Such may be the purgatory of those who are caught up to meet the Lord at the Last Day.

Both views agree that what we in the world call very trivial faults are most severely visited in purgatory. Saint Peter Damian gives us many instances of this and other instances are collected and quoted by Bellarmine. Often those instances include slight feelings of self-complacency, trifling inattentions in the recital of the Divine Office, and the like. Sister Francesca mentions the case of a girl of fourteen in purgatory because she was not quite conformed to the will of God in dying so young. One soul said to her, "Ah men little think in the world how dearly they are going to pay here for faults they hardly note there." Sister Francesca even saw souls that were immensely punished only for having been scrupulous in this life; either, I suppose, because there is mostly self-will in scruples or because they did not lay them down when obedience commanded. Wrong notions about small faults may thus lead us to neglect the dead, to leave off our prayers too soon, as well as lose a lesson for ourselves.

Then, again, both views agree as to the helplessness of the Holy Souls. They lie like the paralytic at the pool. It would seem as if even the coming of the angel were not an

effectual blessing to them, unless one of us helps them. Some have even thought the Holy Souls cannot pray. It seems they have no means of making themselves heard by us even though they depend greatly on our charity.

Some writers have said that Our Blessed Lord will not help them without our cooperation and that Our Blessed Lady cannot help them except in indirect ways because she is no longer able to make satisfaction. I never like to hear anything our dearest mother cannot do, therefore, I regard such statements with suspicion. Whatever may come of these opinions, they at least illustrate the strong way in which theologians apprehend the helplessness of the Holy Souls. Then another feature in their helplessness is the forgetfulness of the living or the cruel flattery of relations who will always have it that those near or dear to them die the deaths of Saints. They would surely have a scruple, if they knew of how many Masses and prayers they rob from the souls by the selfish exaggeration of the goodness of those souls in life. I call it selfish, for it is nothing more than a miserable device to console themselves in their sorrow. The very state of the Holy Souls is one of most unbounded helplessness. They cannot do penance; they cannot merit; they cannot satisfy; they cannot gain indulgences; they have no Sacraments; they are not under the jurisdiction of God's Vicar, overflowing with the plentitude of means of grace and manifold benedictions. They are a portion of the Church without either priesthood or altar at their own command.

Those are the points common to both views of purgatory and how manifold are the lessons we learn from them, on our own behalf as well as on behalf of the Holy Souls. What light does all this throw for us on slovenliness, luke warmness, and love of ease? What does it make us think of performing our devotions out of a mere spirit of formality or a trick of habit? What diligence in our examinations of conscience, confessions, Communions, and prayers! It seems as if the grace of all graces, for which we should ever be importuning our dear Lord, would be to hate sin with something of the hatred wherewith He hated it in the garden of Gethsemane. Oh, is not the purity of God something awful, unspeakable, and adorable?

He, who is Himself a simple act, has gone on acting, multiplying acts since creation, yet he has incurred no stain! He is ever mingling with a most unutterable condescension with what is beneath Him--yet no stain! He loves His creatures with a love immeasurably more intense than the wildest passion of earth--yet no stain! He is omnipotent, yet it is beyond the limits of His power to receive a stain. He is so pure that the very vision of Him causes eternal purity and blessedness. Mary's purity is but a fair thin shadow of it, and yet we, even we, are to dwell in His arms for ever, we are to dwell amid the everlasting burnings of that uncreated purity! Yet, let us look at our lives; let us trace our hearts faithfully through but one day and see of from what mixed

intentions, human respects, self-love, and pusillanimous temper our actions, nay, even our devotions are made. Does not purgatory, heated seven-fold and endured to the day of doom, seem but a gentle novitiate for the Vision of the All-holy?

But some persons turn in anger from the thought of purgatory, as if it were not to be endured. They are angry that after trying all our lives to serve God, we should accomplish the tremendous feat of a good death, only to pass from the agonies of the death bed into fire--long, keen, searching, triumphant, incomparable fire.

Alas! My dear friends, your anger will not help you and will not alter facts. But have you thought sufficiently about God? Have you tried to realize His holiness and purity in assiduous meditation? Is there a real divorce between you and the world which you know is God's enemy? Do you take God's side? Are you devoted to His interests? Do you long for His glory? Have you put sin alongside of our dear Saviors' Passion and measured the one by the other? Surely, if you had, purgatory would seem to you the last, unexpected, and inexpressibly tender invention of an obstinate love, a love that is mercifully determined to save you in spite of yourself. Surely, if you had, it would be a perpetual wonder to you, a joyous wonder, fresh every morning, a wonder that would be meat and drink to your soul, that you, being what you know yourself to be, what God knows you to be, should be saved eternally.

Remember what the suffering soul said so simply, yet with such force, to Sister Francesca: "Ah! Those on that side of the grave little reckon how dearly they will pay on this side for the lives they live! To be angry because you are told you will go to purgatory! Silly, silly people! Most likely it is a great false flattery, and that you will never be good enough to go there at all. Why, positively, you do not recognize your own good fortune, when you are told of it. And none but the humble go there. I remember Maria Crocifissa was told that although many of the Saints while on earth loved God more than some do even in heaven, yet that the greatest Saint on earth was not as humble as the souls in purgatory. I do not think I ever read anything in the lives of the Saints which struck me so much as that. You see it is not good to be angry; for only those lucky enough to get into purgatory are those who sincerely believe themselves to be deserving of hell.

We learn lessons not only for our own good but also for the good of the Holy Souls. We see that our charitable attention towards them must be far more vigorous and persevering than they have been; for men go to purgatory for very little matters and remain there an unexpectedly long time. The Holy Souls' most touching appeal to us lies in their helplessness; and our dear Lord, with His usual loving arrangement, has made the extent of our power to help them more than commensurate with their ability to help themselves. Some theologians have said that prayer for the Holy Souls is not

infallibly answered. I confess I am not convinced of their arguments; but, conceding the point, how wonderful still is the power that we can exercise in favor of the departed! Saint Thomas has at least taught us that prayer for the dead is more readily accepted with God than prayer for the living. We can offer and apply for them all the satisfactions of Our Blessed Lord. We can do vicarious penance for them. We can give to them all the satisfactions of our ordinary actions and of our sufferings. We can make over to them, by way of suffrage, the indulgences we gain, provided the Church has made them applicable to the dead. We can limit and direct to them, or any one of them, the intention of the Adorable Sacrifice. The Church, which has no jurisdiction over them, can yet make indulgences applicable or inapplicable to them by way of suffrage and by means of liturgy, commemoration, incense, holy water, and the like, can reach efficaciously to them, and most of all by her device of privileged altars. The Communion of Saints furnishes the veins and channels by which all these things reach them in Christ. Heaven itself condescends to act upon them through earth. Their Queen helps them by setting us to work for them, and the Angels and the Saints bestow their gifts through us, whom they persuade to be their almoners. No, we are often their almoners without knowing that we are. Our Blessed Lord vouchsafes to look to us, as if He would say, "Here are my weapons, work for me!" Just as a father will let his child do a portion of his work, in spite of the risk he runs in having it spoiled. To possess such powers and to not use them would be the height of irreverence towards God, as well as of want to the charity of men. There is nothing so irreverent as to shrink from God's gifts simply because of their exuberance. Men have a feeling of safety in not meddling with the supernatural; but the truth is, we cannot stand aloof on one side and be safe. Naturalism is the unsafe thing. If we do not enter the system and humbly take our place in it, it will draw us in, only to tear us to pieces when it has done so. The dread of the supernatural is the least safe of our feelings. The jealousy of the supernatural is a prophecy of eternal loss.

It is not saying too much to call devotion to the Holy Souls a kind of central place where all Catholic devotions meet and it satisfies more than any other single devotion because it is a devotion all of love and of disinterested love. If we cast an eye over the chief Catholic devotion, we shall see the truth of this. Take the devotion of Saint Ignatius to the glory of God. This, if we may dare to use such an expression of Him, was the special and favorite devotion of Jesus. Now, purgatory is simply a field white for the harvest of God's glory. Not a prayer can be said for the Holy Souls without glorifying God, both by the faith and the charity of the mere prayer.

Again, what devotion is justly dearest to Christians than the devotion to the Sacred Humanity of Jesus? It is a family of various beautiful devotions, rather than devotion by itself. Yet see how they are all, as it were, fulfilled, affectionately fulfilled, in

devotion to the Holy Souls. The quicker the souls are liberated from purgatory, the more is the bountiful harvest of His Blessed Passion multiplied and accelerated. An early harvest is a blessing, as well as a plentiful one; for delaying a soul's entry into the praise of Heaven is an eternal and irremediable delay in honor and glory to the Sacred Humanity of Jesus. How strangely things sound in the language of the sanctuary! Yet so it is. Can the Sacred Humanity of Jesus be honored more than by the adorable sacrifice of the Mass? But this is our chief action upon purgatory. Faith in His Sacraments as used for the dead is a pleasing homage to Jesus; and the same may be said of faith in indulgences and privileged altars and the like. The powers of the Church will flow from His Sacred Humanity and are a perpetual praise and thanks offering to it. So, again, this devotion honors Him by imitating His zeal for souls. For this zeal is a badge of His people and an inheritance for Him.

Devotion to our dearest Mother is equally comprehended in this devotion to the Holy Souls, whether we look at her as the Mother of Jesus, and so sharing the honors of His Sacred Humanity, or as Mother of Mercy, and so especially worshipped by works of mercy, or, lastly, whether we regard her as, in a particular sense, the queen of purgatory, and so having all manner of dear interests to be promoted in the welfare and deliverance of those suffering souls.

Next to this we may rank devotion to the Holy Angels, which is also satisfied in devotion to the Holy Souls. For it keeps filling the vacant thrones in the angelic choirs, those unsightly gaps which the fall of Lucifer and one-third of the heavenly host occasioned. It multiplies the companions of the blessed spirits. Angels are supposed to look with a special interest on that part of the Church that lies in purgatory because it is already crowned with their own dear gift and ornament of final perseverance. Yet, it has not entered into its inheritance as they did. Many angels also have a tender personal interest in purgatory as thousands, perhaps millions, of angels are guardians to those souls, and their work is not yet complete. Thousands of angels have clients in purgatory who were especially devoted to their angels in life.

Devotion to the Saints also has its interests in this devotion for the dead. It fills the Saints with the delights of charity, as it swells their numbers, and beautifies their ranks and orders. Numberless patron saints are personally in multitudes of souls. The affectionate relation between their clients and themselves not only subsists, but a deeper tenderness has entered into it, because of the fearful suffering, and a livelier interest because of the accomplished victory. They see in the Holy Souls their handiwork, the fruit of their patronage, the beautiful and finished crown of their affectionate intercession.

But there is another peculiarity in this devotion for the dead. It does not rest in words

and feelings, nor does it merely lead to action indirectly and at last. It is action itself, and thus it is a substantial devotion. It speaks and a deed is done; it loves and a pain is lessened; it sacrifices, and a soul is delivered. Nothing can be more solid. We might also dare to compare it, in its purest measure, to the efficacious voice of God, which works what it says, and effects what it utters, and wills and a creation comes. The royal devotion of the Church is the works of mercy; and they are all satisfied in this devotion for the dead. It feeds Jesus, the Bread of Angels, to the hungry souls. It gives them His Precious Blood to drink in their incomparable thirst. It clothes the naked with a robe of glory. It visits the sick with mighty powers to heal and at the end consoles them by the visit. It frees the captives, with a heavenly and eternal freedom, from bondage more frightening than death. It takes in the strangers and heaven is the hospice into which it receives them. It buries the dead in the Bosom of Jesus in everlasting rest. When the last doom comes and our dearest Lord asks those seven questions of His judicial process, those interrogatories of the works of mercy, how happy will that person be, and that person may be the poorest beggar amongst us who never gave any alms because he has had to live on alms himself, who shall hear his own defense sweetly and eloquently taken up by crowds of blessed souls, to whom he has done all these things while they waited in their prison of hope.

Another point of view, from which we may look at this devotion for the dead, is as a specially complete and beautiful exercise of the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. They are, the supernatural fountains of our entire spiritual life.

This devotion is not a less heroic exercise of the theological virtue of hope, the virtue so sadly wanting in the spiritual life of these times. For, look what a mighty edifice this devotion raises: lofty, intricate, and of magnificent proportions, into which, somehow or other, all creation is drawn--from the little headache we offer up to the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, and which has to do even with God Himself. Yet upon what does all this rest, except on a simple, childlike trust in God's Fidelity, which is the supernatural motive of hope? We hope for the souls we help and unbounded are the benedictions that we hope for in this regard. We hope to find mercy ourselves because of our mercy; and this hope quickens our efforts without detracting from the merit of our charity. If we give away our own satisfaction and the indulgences we gain to the souls in purgatory, instead of keeping them for ourselves, what is it but a heroic exercise of hope? We throw ourselves upon God. We hardly face the thought that we ourselves are thus sentencing ourselves, it may be, to abide years and years longer in that unconquerable fire. We shut our eyes, we quell the rising thought, we give our alms, and we throw ourselves upon God. We shall not be defrauded of our hope. Whoever trusted Him and His trust failed? No! No! All is right when it is left to God.

As to the charity of this devotion, it dares to imitate even the charity of God Himself. What else is there in Heaven or on earth that does not embrace with such facility, with so much gracefulness, as if there were scarcely an effort in it, or as if self was charmed away and might not mingle to distract it? It is an exercise of the love of God because it is loving those whom He loves, and loving them because He loves them and to augment His glory and multiply His praise. There are a hundred loves of God in this one love, as we would see if we reflected on those Holy Souls and realized all that was implied in the final entry of a soul into everlasting bliss. It is love towards the Sacred Humanity of Jesus because it magnifies the copious redemption of Jesus. It honors His merits, satisfactions, ordinances, and mysteries. It peoples His Heaven and it glorifies His Blood. It is filled with Jesus, with His spirit, with His work, with His power, and with His victories. It is also an exercise of love to our dearest Lady, as I have shown before, and to the Angels and Saints.

How abundant is its charity to the souls themselves? We have the choice to give them the good measure of all the Church tells us to do and some spontaneous alms besides; the full measure of all our satisfactions during our lifetime that are not by justice due elsewhere (as Saint Gertrude gave them); or the measure shaken together that adds what shall be done for us when we are dead (like Father Munroy's heroic act of self-renunciation); or the measure running over that heaps upon all the rest special works of love such as promoting this devotion by conversions, sermons, and books, or by getting masses, communions, penances, and indulgences from others for them.

All men living on the earth, even unconverted sinners, are included in it, because it swells the Church Triumphant, and so multiplies intercessors for us who are still warring upon earth. To us it is also an exercise of charity. It gains us friends in heaven; it earns mercy for us when we will be in purgatory (tranquil victims, yet, oh, in what distress!); and it augments our merits in the sight of God. So, if only we persevere, our eternal recompense will come in the hereafter. If this tenderness for the dead is such an exercise of faith, hope, and charity and, if again, even heroic sanctity consists principally in the exercise of those virtues, what store ought we not to set upon this touching and beautiful devotion!

A further excellence in this devotion is to be found in its effects upon the spiritual life. It would seem as if it were a devotion specially intended for interior souls. The fact is, it is so full of doctrine, and embodies so much that is supernatural that we need not be surprised at the influence it exercises over the spiritual life. In the first place, it is a hidden work from first to last. We do not see the results, so there is little food for vain-glory, and is it a devotion that is exercised away from the eyes of others. It implies, moreover, an utter ignoring of self by making away with our own satisfactions and indulgences and by keeping up a tender interest in a goal that does

not directly concern ourselves. It is not only for the glory of God, but it is for His greater glory and for His glory alone. It leads us to think purely of souls, which is very difficult to do in this material world, and to think of them, too, simply as spouses of Jesus. We thus gain a habit of mind that is fatal to the spirit of the world and to the tyranny of human respect but it goes far to counteract the poison of self love. The incessant thought of the Holy Souls keeps before us a continual image of suffering; and not only passive suffering but also a joyful conformity to the will of God under that suffering. Yet, this is the very genius of the Gospel, the very atmosphere of holiness.

Furthermore, it communicates to us, by sympathy, the feelings of those Holy Souls and therefore increases our trembling, yet trustful, devotion to the adorable purity of God. Except in the case of indulgences applied to the dead, because it requires a state of grace to make satisfaction for the sins of others, it is a special act of the lay priesthood of the members of Christ. The spirit of the devotion is one of pensiveness which is an antidote to frivolity and hardness, and tells wonderfully upon the affectionate character that belongs to high sanctity. We can tell what will come after patient years of thus keeping constantly before our eyes a model of eagerness, unspeakable, patient eagerness, to be with our dearest Lord? It is almost omnipotent, almost omnipresent, because it is not so much he who lives as much as Christ who lives in him! What is it we are touching and handling every day of our lives, all so full of supernatural vigor, of secret unction, of divine force, and yet we consider it not, but waste intentions and trifle time away in the midst of this stupendous supernatural system of grace, as unreflecting almost as a stone embedded in the earth and born round unconsciously in its impetuous revolutions, day after da

Nihil Obstat:

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Imprimi Potest:

Joannes Carolus, Archiep. Dublinen., Hiberniae Prirnas

Dublini die 28 November 1956.



This e-book was produced by:

THE SERAPHIM COMPANY, INC.
8528 KENOSHA DRIVE
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO 80908-5000

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